



**#50 Ki Tavo 2020, Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8
and Teaching: Be Approved to God
By Moshe Schwab**

Introduction

The Torah portion for this week is Ki Tavo and means, "when you enter." We teach the Torah portions because it was instituted by God's holy prophets, perhaps Nehemiah. Yeshua would have taught from the portions and that is what He was doing in Luke 4:21. Gentiles are to also learn and keep the Torah. It says about the Gentiles in Acts 15:21 NKJV, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Tavo comes from the Hebrew word Bo which means to come. Yeshua said in Matthew 23:39 NKJV, "I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who **comes** in the name of the LORD!'" He is quoting Psalm 118:26 which uses יהוה, Yĕhōvâh, for LORD. It is interesting that in these times that the name of Yĕhōvâh is being taught again. It is not true that we are not to use God's true name. The Bible says that this is his name forever. LORD in all caps is Yĕhōvâh, יהוה. "The LORD God of your fathers ... this is My name forever," Exodus 3:15 NKJV. Yĕhōvâh is used over 6,000 times in the Bible!

Let God's light make its way into your life. Psalm 119:103-105 NKJV says, "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments."

Sweets are often treats that we eat. The psalmist says that God's commandments are like honey; they are like a special treat because they give us understanding. It then says that God's word are a light to our path. Light means understanding so again, God's word give us understanding. God's words are a light for our path in life. But by all means, stay on the path where there is life.

I remember talking about this when I visited some jungle churches and it turned out to be very meaningful to them. Almost everyone in the jungle uses paths or a river to get places. These paths make sure you will not get lost. Getting lost in the jungle can cost you your life. Getting off the path in your spiritual life can cost you your eternal life.

Find ways to bring God's joy into your life. Learn to appreciate what God has done for us and the wonderful understanding and light that God gives us. Learning to be thankful is a great way to bring joy into your life. Having joy in our spiritual life is a commandment of God in this portion. Deuteronomy 28:47 NKJV says, "Serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of

heart, for the abundance of everything.”

Since God’s word is sweet, we should have joy for having His scriptures. Nehemiah 8:10 NKJV says, “For the joy of the LORD is your strength.” Psalms 1:1-2 NKJV says, “Blessed is the man, ... his delight is in the law of the LORD.” Psalms 100:2 NKJV says, “Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing.” When the people would go up to Jerusalem on pilgrimage for God’s feasts, they would sing spiritual songs joyfully as they would go. In a similar way in our lives, during our lives, during our pilgrimage of life, we should live our lives with joy. If we remain faithful, when our pilgrimage is over at the end of our lives, we will be with God in the future kingdom.

I remember someone once telling me how grateful he was for the godly life he had. He was so glad that the sinful world did not have control over his life. Think about it, you are not a slave to sin anymore because you now keep God’s commandments. Yeshua said in John 8:34 NKJV, “Jesus answered them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.’” Have joy for what you have and hold on tight to the truth. Philippians 2:15-16 NKJV says, “That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.” We have the words for this life and for eternal life. How wonderful and exceptional is that!

Someone who does not have joy and thankfulness is often a negative person who causes problems. I knew a person who always complained and you could tell he was a little strange. He tried to stir up trouble, but I would not listen to him. We have a lot to be thankful for. Do not be a sad grumpy person.

What you give out will return to you. If you spend all your time in worldly activities, you will get only what you have made with your hands. In the end, all the worldly things we have done will come to nothing. Galatians 6:8 NKJV says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” We have so much to be thankful for spiritually, why would we give it up for something that will not matter and come to nothing?

Some ways are easier than others; choose the right way. We can go along with what others are doing or live the truth. I think of Abraham deciding to follow God in the middle of a mixed-up crazy world that practiced idolatry. His own family practiced idolatry, but he made a stand and he passed that on to a believing people. James 2:20-21 NKJV says, “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works.” Abraham took a stand for what was right and did what was right. His son Ya’akov, Jacob, followed God and Ya’akov became the father of a believing nation and then later the Messiah Yeshua was born through his lineage.

His other son Esav, Esau, became worldly and did not amount to anything by comparison. Hebrews 12:16 NKJV says, “Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.” Esav only lived for his desires. Instead, desire the things of God over the things of this world. “God is not mocked” it said in Galatians, so do not think

you call fool God. This leads us to the next section of our teaching.

This is the season just before the "High Holy Days." And this is a time to examine our lives and make changes to be better at following God. Rosh Hashanah begins the new year and perhaps looks forward to the new heaven and earth where we will reign with Yeshua. 2 Timothy 2:11-12 NKJV says, "This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." So, in order to be part of the future kingdom, we must continue and "endure" to do what is "right and good." Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is **right and good.**"

Inspect yourself and be open to areas in your life that need change. Proverbs 3:7 NKJV says, "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil." Doing "right and good" is to keep God's commandments; doing evil is not to keep them.

God's ways are not difficult and apply easily to life; they lead to blessings for life. Perhaps we think of the ordinary as not being too exciting, but good results in life are truly exciting even without the extraordinary. I have been thrilled with my relationship with God; and why not, after all, He is the creator God. Doing what is right can bring us personal peace. I remember this guy years ago who tried to amaze people with his stunts, and he paid for it with numerous injuries. That does not sound like it is exciting to me. That is what he got out of life.

There are different paths to take in life, but there is only one true and good way. Not all paths lead to God. Some people say that God is good and will not deny anyone eternal life, but if they have denied God's good advice, they have denied and despised the goodness of God.

We may try to do all kinds of things to please God, but following His instructions is always the best way to live. Sometimes we think that we must make up something extra to do to please God. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 NKJV says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." So, be careful to do what God wants us to do first. Our first duty is to love God. Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always."

I want to take a few minutes to explain some biblical concepts about forgiveness. First there are sins that are unintentional. Before the Messiah Yeshua came, a sacrifice was required for unintentional sins; see Numbers 15:24, 27. They would be sins like, to do something you do not know is wrong, and another type of unintentional sin, would be to find out later that something you did was wrong. These sins required a sacrifice. In the book of Hebrews, it says that Yeshua offered up Himself for our sins, so the sacrificial system is no longer required. Hebrews 7:26-27 NKJV says about Yeshua, "For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." We must confess our sins to God with the understanding that Yeshua sacrificed Himself for our sins so we could be forgiven.

There was no sacrifice for intentional sin. Instead, intentional sin must be repented of. Deuteronomy 4:25 NKJV says, "When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly." Then it says that God will then forgive them if they turn to God, repent, and keep His commandments. It says in Deuteronomy 4:30 NKJV, "Turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice (for the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you." It does not say we are to give a sacrifice for intentional sin, but we must repent, and we should also pray for forgiveness.

What is intentional sin? The intentional sinner is saying to God that they believe they are right, and that God must put up with them and how they are living. Sometimes people commit an intentional sin when they are weak. All intentional sins require a turning away from the sin and a prayer. Hosea 14:2 NKJV says, "Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.'" Read Psalm 51 as an example of a prayer for the forgiveness of an intentional sin. King David says that that he is sorry for his sin and he also says there is no sacrifice for the intentional sin he committed, but the requirement is to repent. Psalms 51:16-17 NKJV, "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart — these, O God, You will not despise."

Also, what if there was no Temple or it was too far for them to go to the Temple for the sacrifice of unintentional sin. Israel understood that they could offer a sacrifice through prayer as it says in Hosea.

Notice you are confessing your sin to God, and you stand before God. It requires that we ask for forgiveness of sin and to not commit the sin again. God will not forgive those who are not committed to stop sinning, they are double minded the Bible says. But He will forgive us as many times as necessary if we are truly sorry. Proverbs 15:8 NKJV says, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright is His delight." The sacrifices of those who blatantly continued to sin were not forgiven. It is the prayer of the upright for forgiveness that is accepted.

Those who are not committed to keeping God's commandments will not be forgiven, their prayer of forgiveness is disgusting to God, and an abomination it says. God knows our hearts. That is why Ya'akov says in James 4:8-10 NKJV, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." We must have a pure heart in order to be forgiven.

In this New Testament era, we are to humble ourselves to God and confess our sin to God. We are to turn to God and live right with understanding that we have forgiveness through Yeshua HaMashiach, namely, Yeshua the Messiah. Light which means understanding refers to Deuteronomy 4:6. 1 John 1:7-9 NKJV says, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Again, we are to make a prayer with our lips in place of the sacrifice for unintentional sin with the understanding that Yeshua's sacrifice cleanses us of our sins and atones for our sins, but any sin requires we are not "double-minded," we must stop doing the sin.

Also, just like in the Old Testament portion, intentional sin requires that we say a prayer asking God for forgiveness and turn away from that sin, repent, stop doing that sin. Also, since we are in a Messianic age, we ask for forgiveness with the understanding that Yeshua the Messiah gave Himself for our sin. Isaiah 53:6 NKJV says about the Messiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Again, God is a good and merciful God who will forgive us as many times as we repent, but those who are half-hearted and wicked in the heart will not be forgiven as it says in Proverbs 15:8. We must purify our hearts as Ya'akov said in James 4:8-10.

Torah Study

After Israel came into the land that God provided for them, they were to present their first fruit to the Cohen (priest) at the place where God chose to place His name and recite a message of humility; the people were to have joy for what God has given them. We too need to be mindful that God is over all and that He provides for us.

We often read right over these scriptures on the first fruit without thinking; God's people are to make themselves humble before God. We are to confess that we are a pagan Aramean. It teaches us that we were all at one time sinful people. That was our heritage. I remember my dad reciting that scripture about us being Aramean; it was quite startling for me. "We are what?!" It is about our ancestors originally being sinful idolaters and not about our victory over Laban as some say. It teaches us to be a humble people.

Shaul talks about humility in Romans 3:10 NKJV; "There is none righteous, no, not one." He is quoting Psalms where it says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one." Psalms 14:1-3 NKJV.

As we can see, it is talking about someone who does not believe in God. Shaul uses these verses because it is Jewish practice to be humble. In this case, he is talking about being humble enough to accept the help of the Holy Spirit. Those reading his letter would have understood this. Most people quoting this verse do not share the true context of this verse because they do not understand how to take the Bible in its true context. Shaul means in Romans 3:10 that although we work at doing what is right, we know intuitively that we still make mistakes and sin.

Some people flippantly use Shaul's scripture in Romans 3:10 to say we can do nothing good. That is ridiculous and not true; The Bible says, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good;" Genesis 1:31 NKJV. Their "nothing good" man-made philosophy is a non-biblical philosophy being applied to God's word. They are practicing self abasement which is not biblical. Some religions practice things like hurting themselves; that is wrong. God asks us

to do what is right and good, but we still sin at times. We need to be humble enough to accept that. Humility is to be part of our thinking.

God brought Israel out of Egypt so they could do what is "right and good." Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is **right and good** in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you." They could actually do what is good and so can we. When I say we are to do what is "right and good," I am actually quoting scripture.

God also helps us to live right, to be righteous, through the help of the Holy Spirit; we are given the Holy Spirit through the Messiah Yeshua to help us live holy lives. If we follow God's commandments, some day we will be part of His future eternal kingdom. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

The portion continues; after they presented their first fruit, they were to have joy in what Yĕhōvâh had given them. They were also to set aside every 3rd year a tenth for the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows; after they did that, they were to say a prayer and ask for a blessing from God. They were to give a little over 10% every year. On the 3rd and 6th years they were to give to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows. The other years except for the 7th year they took their giving to Jerusalem.

Every 7th year the land was to rest and debts were forgiven, see Exodus 23:10-11 and also Deuteronomy Chapter 15. People were to share with others who had need. The shmitah year of course poses a problem for those who need income and food on the 7th year. Farmers now rotate their crops and leave some of their land fallow and therefore give their land rest. Not leaving land fallow makes the land barren and unable to grow anything. Perhaps this is why God had them do this. Some Jews follow a complex concept of shmitah; one of the things they do is to only buy from Gentiles on the 7th year. God's commands were never intended to be complex.

There is a lot that can be talked about regarding the shmitah year. Canceling all kinds of debt could make it impossible for a person to own a house because it would call for full payment within 7 years. That is because all debt then becomes relative to the 7 year shmitah. Owning a house and making payments is considered an asset and not so much a debt. So it does not apply to the shmitah year. Perhaps only incurring other debt to last over 7 years would be an applied practice for the law of shmitah. Certainly, having good foresight and careful money management would be a good way to apply shmitah. Setting proper borrowing limits would enable people to keep a short term clean slate financially.

Obviously, lenders are not practicing proper borrowing limits and the individual would need to take charge of their own limits. Taking some extra time off on the shmitah year could be a way to observe the resting of the land, but the commandment is not a rest from work; the land is at rest. Most certainly, rotating crops would be a proper application of the practice of shmitah. We should not overthink this commandment and make it convoluted in practice. We don't live in an all-farming society any more as they did. Farmers can find other ways to provide for themselves on a year the land is at rest. We call this diversifying.

This portion goes on to say, by agreeing to obey God's commands and be holy, God would make them His treasured people. This is often mentioned in the Old Testament portion (see Exodus 9:5; Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; and Psalms 135:4) and it is also quoted in 1 Peter 2:9. Therefore, Messianic believers are also God's treasured people when we obey God's commandments. They were to write the Torah on stones on Mt. Ebal after they crossed over, set up an altar, make offerings, and rejoice.

After they crossed over to the promised land, curses were to be given from Mt. Ebal and blessings from Mt. Gerizim. Then Moshe told them cursed is anyone who makes an idol, mistreats their parents, moves a landmark, mistreats the blind, or pervert's justice. Cursed is anyone who lies with his father's wife, or an animal, or his sister. Cursed is anyone who takes a bribe or does not agree to the Torah.

This portion talks about the curses for not doing what God commands and the blessings for obeying God. We also can be cursed if we are not obeying God's commandments. Those who are willfully sinning can incur consequences for their sin which includes sickness, losses of various kinds, and God releasing His protection over them. Continuing in intentional sin will also result in the loss of eternal life.

Understand though that Yeshua said we will all experience trouble; it is wrong to think that just because someone is having trouble that it is something that they are doing that is causing that. Yeshua said in John 16:33 NKJV, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." We know that living godly and good lives blesses our lives even though we all can suffer troubles at times.

We all suffer, but doing wrong often brings more troubles. Rabbi Shaul (Paul) also associates curses with sin in the New Testament portion. Romans 1:26-27 NKJV says, "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." Shaul says they received a penalty for their sin. He says it was something that believers saw happening to those who were committing these sins. Even in our modern society, 25% of homosexuals have the deadly disease AIDS. As of this writing, 31 million people have died from AIDS; most of them participants in sexual sin. They have brought this terrible consequence on themselves.

If they obey the law, God will bless them wherever they are; He will bless them in conception, against their enemies, with their stored food, their livestock, and rain. They will be an exalted nation. If they disobey God's commands, they will lose these benefits and they will be struck with sickness, plague, war, loss, and blight; they will be destroyed and they will be scattered. The people respond and affirm various commandments in this portion. Notice that the 10 commandments are not all of God's commandments. Moshe closes by relating about their time in the desert and by telling them that they should obey God's commands so they will prosper.

The Haftarah for Ki Tavo is Isaiah 60:1-22. This Haftarah portion says that the nations will see the glory of God through Israel and that the nations will acknowledge that and bless Israel. The

nations that do not will perish. It says shalom will be Israel's leader, they will do what is right, and God will be their light.

This portion is talking about a future time when the Prince of Peace (namely Sar Shalom) will be their leader (the Prince of Peace or Sar Shalom is another name attributed to Yeshua the Messiah). Likewise in Revelation 22:5, Yochanan says that God will be their light in the new Jerusalem.

Even in the present we see God's blessings on those who do what is right and good. Someday those who love God will be with Him forever and experience God's goodness and blessings forever.

Isaiah 60:1-3 CJB from the Haftarah says, "Arise, shine [Yerushalayim], for your light has come, the glory of ADONAI has risen over you. For although darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the peoples; on you ADONAI will rise; over you will be seen his glory. Nations will go toward your light and kings toward your shining splendor.

When I read this, I think about pillars of light coming down from the sky? I enjoy looking at amazing sunsets, clouds, and beautiful skies. The pillars of light sometimes give me thoughts of God's divine light coming down from heaven. It a nice spiritual picture, isn't it? Do we actually allow God's light into our lives? That is what is important.

For fun, what kinds of things in the natural can sometimes make us think about God?

Pillars of light – God giving His light from heaven.

A rainbow – God's promises are true.

A dry field – life without God is barren and difficult.

A beautiful sunset – in the end, we will be blessed for being faithful to God.

Flowers – God's creation is beautiful and amazing.

What other things in nature might relate to God or make you think about God?

Be Approved to God

(A practical teaching to accompany the Torah teaching, Ki Tavo)

People think they are learning biblical truths, but they can be an incomplete or muddled versions of truth; it can often be founded on some topical rendering of doctrine; these are often characterized by specific doctrinal movements; for example, the faith movement, shepherding movement, Toronto blessing, or the sacrificial living movement.

The Bible tells us to be diligent to do things God's way. When we are only concentrating on a single idea from the Bible, we are missing out on some of the message that God intends us to understand. Shaul said in 2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV, "**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God**, a worker who does not need to be ashamed."

How many of us have worked hard to show ourselves approved to parents, or to bosses, or the community. Years ago, I hoped to get the approval of my future wife and I still try to please her – that's part of being married to someone. I made a lifelong commitment to my wife and I've made a lifelong commitment to God. Both require our day by day effort. Colossians 3:23-24 CJB

says, "Whatever work you do, put yourself into it, as those who are serving not merely other people, but the Lord. Remember that as your reward, you will receive the inheritance from the Lord. You are slaving for the Lord, for the Messiah."

We are serving God and not our denomination or belief system. Faith is very important and we are to have faith towards God in all that we do, but not all scriptures are interpreted in terms of faith or trust in God. The faith movement might say about 2 Timothy 2:15 that we are to be diligent in our faith. That might be true, but most of all it is saying we need to be approved to God in all we do and a major part of that is to keep God's commandments. Yeshua, Shaul, and the Messianic message of the gospel of John make a strong point for faith, but we need a well rounded spiritual life. We are to live out our life in faith and act accordingly.

The shepherding movement was great at making sure that people had proper follow up and grew up spiritually. Some used to assign people to do this with each new person. People definitely need help to grow, but after awhile the movement got a little controlling. Kefa said, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;" 1 Peter 5:2-3 NKJV.

Instead, its better to make sure people have opportunity for instruction and growth. That's why we have these teachings; so we can be reminded how to live right and grow spiritually. Some say they only want to have group sharing sessions; that is great, but we also need solid teaching to help us live right. I'm all for a during the week meeting as well. We need teaching to help us understand God's word the way it was originally intended to be understood.

*In our culture there is a serious need
for biblical teaching in its proper context.*

I remember hearing a story about this pastor who was trying to impress his congregation. Someone said to him afterwards, "Where did you get that from?" What is most important; just giving lots of impressive information or teaching people to do what is "right and good?" Deuteronomy 6:18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently ... do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD." Remember, 2 Timothy 2:15 said to be diligent to be approved to God. Amazingly similar in thought, aren't these two scriptures.

Many read the Bible out of context and they are not doing themselves any favors. It says in 2 Peter 3:16 NKJV, "Which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. If you are reading the scriptures without the context of the Old Testament portion, then you are in trouble Kefa basically says. There was no New Testament portion at the time. They were untaught in the Old Testament; they did not know the Torah.

The Toronto blessing movement and those associated with it got out of control. People started going to their churches just to hear prophesy. Shaul said that is important (1 Corinthians 14:1) and the work of the Holy Spirit is important, but that is only one of the things we need as a believer. We also need God's word and His instructions.

The sacrificial living movement has its roots in asceticism. Asceticism means denial of self. While that is not a bad thing to do at times; and fasting can be a good way to readjust your focus on life towards God; again, it is not the only thing we are to do. When I fast, I think about how God more important than worldly things. Shaul says that an acetic way of living is wrong. People can go to extremes in this.

The self denial we are to engage in is to stay away from sin; to stay faithful to God.

Shaul tells us that that we are to keep God's commandments and not indulge our fleshy desires.

Colossians 2:23 NKJV: "These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh."

Moshe chose to keep God's commandments instead of sin. The affliction came from unbelievers.

Hebrews 11:25 NKJV: Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin."

Kefa also says we are to stay away from sin.

1 Peter 2:11 NKJV": "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

Shaul tells us to fight a spiritual fight by bringing our thoughts under control and keep God's commandments.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NKJV: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Yeshua tells us to be faithful; some may persecute us or break off relationships with us. We may lose our belongings. We may have to do some of those things in order to receive eternal life.

Matthew 19:29 NKJV: "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."

Yeshua said we may even have to take up our execution stake (cross) and die for our faith. Yeshua died on a stake and not a cross. The translators were reading that into the scriptures. The word for cross always means stake.

Mark 8:34 NKJV: "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Yeshua said in Revelation 2:10 NKJV, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

God's true ways speak to us and help us live right; they touch all components of life.

Deuteronomy 27:15-26 and 28:15-68 contain a multitude of commandments that touch on many areas of life. Do not commit idolatry.; do not treat parents poorly; do not remove landmarks; don't mistreat the blind; be just toward the disadvantaged. It is quite a lengthy list and is worth your time to read. As you can see, the Bible covers a lot of important attitudes and commands that we should do. It makes sense to treat everyone well, especially your parents. No one should cheat people out of their land by moving a landmark. We should treat everyone well including the disadvantaged.

God gives us His good words in the Bible. They are truths that we can live by. Psalm 26:3 NKJV says, "For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, And I have walked in Your truth." Psalm 40:11 NKJV says that God's word can preserve us, it says: "Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me." God wants us to know His truths so we can be wise. Who would not want to be wise? Psalms 51:6 NKJV says, "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom."

We may start out thinking that one version of a belief system is truth when in fact it is only part of what God wants us to understand.

Each of the things I talked about earlier need to be understood properly. People can get all excited about prophesy and then stop reading the Bible! Some may get controlling in their attitudes, but we are to try to guide people and not be a lord over their life. We can fast at times, but we are not to continually live that way. What is most important is to stay away from sin and keep God's commandments. We should never abuse ourselves or beat ourselves like some pagans do. The Bible teaches us to protect life (see Luke 14:5).

Do not forget about the working of the Holy Spirit; it is very important.

Some denominations completely ignore the scriptures that talk about the Holy Spirit. We are commanded to receive the Holy Spirit. Kefa said in Acts 2:38 NKJV, "You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is good, so the gifts of the Holy Spirit are also good; we are to seek God's good gifts. Yeshua said in Luke 11:13 NKJV, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

We are commanded to seek the spiritual gifts associated with the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV says, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." Shaul even says that what he writes about the gifts of the Holy Spirit are commandments of God, 1 Corinthians 14:37 NKJV says, "Let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." I think people skip over 1 Corinthians Chapters 12-14 because they are told to. They wouldn't ignore the gifts of the Holy Spirit if they knew they were disobeying God for not seeking God's gifts mentioned in the Bible.

*People do not realize they are disobeying God's commandments
by not pursuing the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

We may feel devoted to a faulty belief system; God wants to set us free and to have joy in a more complete design of biblical truth.

I was just talking to someone about believing in the Bible. I used to go to a church where the pastor taught his personal good advice. He said he believed in the Bible and I am sure He would defend that, but he actually didn't believe in doing what the Bible said. He trusted in his own good advice instead of teaching the Bible. That is crazy, isn't it? If we are not teaching people to do what the Bible says, do we believe in the Bible? Do these people who are teaching us not to do all the Bible says, believe in the Bible?

We are in relationship with God by actually doing what He tells us. We are part of the family

and God is our Father if we make Him our Father and trust in Him and His word. Have you ever noticed that people who lack joy are often negative and draining to us and others. Actual trust in God requires we have joy in serving Him and in keeping His commandments. We are commanded to serve God with joy. Deuteronomy 28:47-48 NKJV says, "Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy ... He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you." When the Israelites would go to Jerusalem, they would travel along on their pilgrimage with joy and singing. What a beautiful picture of what our life's pilgrimage should be. I love having a feeling of joy. We need to watch our attitudes.

Moshe closes this portion by telling them about their time in the desert and that they should obey God's commands so they would be in relationship with God and prosper. They were to stay in relationship, covenant is an agreed upon relationship. Deuteronomy 29:9 NKJV says, "Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do;" Do you want to be in agreement with God? Then trust God and keep His commandments with joy.

When the Israelites would go to Jerusalem, they would travel along on their pilgrimage with joy and singing. What a beautiful picture of what our life's pilgrimage should be.

There are more commandments in this portion. We should remember that God gave us His commandments to help us. If we keep His commandments God says we will be His treasured people. I want to be one of God's treasured people. The Bible teaches us that we are to be a humble people. We can incur curses by not keeping God's commandments; often these are in the form of consequences. We will receive blessings if we keep God's commandments and even supernatural blessings! We need biblical truths and not an incomplete or muddled version of truth. God's ways are true, they help us live right, and are intended to be part of all our life; it should include the working of the Holy Spirit. God wants us to keep His commands, to have all of His good blessings, and have joy in life.